



MBTN

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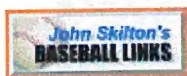
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data you're after, visit the All-Time Numerical Roster and Coaches & Managers lists. The McKnightmare highlights oddities in Mets uniform history.

What's New Feb. 21, 2002

From St. Lucie (Feb. 21): Once again, the December press conference proves an unreliable barometer. From a Spring Training workout, here's some obvious hint **David Weathers** will wear **No. 35**, the same jersey issued to **Mark Guthrie** in December. Well, they worked it out: Guthrie is wearing **53** -- the first since **Eric Hillman** all those years ago.





MBTN is live from Queens

Spring Training invitees are major league vets **John Valentin** and **Endy Chavez**. Valentin wore **13** with Boston -- a number occupied by Edgardo Alfonzo. Chavez wore No. **43** most recently for Detroit. **Darren Bragg**, who wore **56** with the Mets briefly last season, has also been invited.

Roster Updated (Feb 1): The occasionally reliable [Mets.com web site](http://Mets.com) updated its roster, assigning the following numbers to the new arrivals:

Lou Collier 9

Robbie Alomar 12



Satoru Komiyama 17

Roger Cedeno 18*

Jeff D'Amico 18*

Jeromy Burnitz 20

Mark Sweeney 23

Gary Matthews Jr. 25

Mike Bacsik 33

Pedro Astacio 34

Mark Guthrie 35**

David Weathers 35**



Mo Vaughn 42

Craig House 48

Shawn Estes 55

*--MBTN expects Cedeno will switch to the recently vacated 19, his number in his last go-round with the Mets.

** -- This is an obvious goof. Expect to see Weathers in a different get-up.

Please note that these numbers won't be "officially recognized" by MBTN until the players appear in a regular-season game. Changes to the roster, and perhaps the unis, are very likely to occur before the team breaks camp.

News of this seasons' previous changes have been moved to the [Archives page](#).

Updates Coming: MBTN is examining some new bits of information on **Dave Roberts** and **Ron Swoboda**, among others, and as always, we're on the lookout for needed updates and corrections. Also coming this offseason: updated photos and bios, features and more.

New! Archived roster moves from this season and their effect on uni

history are now on their own page [here](#). I'll get fancier with it at a later date.

Stay in Touch: MBTN is reasonably sure the the info on this site is accurate, but there is no way of knowing if there are corrections still to be made. If you have a question, suggestion, correction or even a hunch something's missing, please [let us know!](#)

What's your favorite Mets number?: Get interactive and add your comments [here](#).

Get Your Mets: Please visit the fabulous Ultimate Mets Database!



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When you're fed up with your favorite players getting arrested

Hofstetter's Baseball Jerk of the Week

"Where nice guys finish last"



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On a 1983 episode of "This Week in Baseball," **Mookie Wilson** said, "Number 1 is my number because.... that's the number they gave me in spring training." Turned out to be a pretty apt decision. Who better than Mookie -- perhaps the most popular Met ever -- to lead off any discussion of Mets history? Mookie played center field for the Mets from 1980-1989, and was at the plate for the most important single at-bat in team history.



That's Mookie (with Tim Teufel and Lenny Dykstra) following that at-bat, which produced both the tying and winning runs in the 10th inning of Game 6 of the 1986 World Series. All Mook really did was foul off a few pitches, skip out of the way of a wild pitch, and hit a slow grounder to first base that Bill Buckner couldn't handle... but it was classic Mookie. He was traded in the bloody summer of 1989, but not before compiling a career as the Mets all-time leader in stolen bases (281) and triples (62). He's now patrolling the first base lines as a coach. The Mets should retire his number.

The Mets have traditionally issued No. 1 to scrappy leadoff center fielders, including Hall of Famer **Richie Ashburn**, who led off the very first Mets game in 1962; and **Lance Johnson**, who set team records for hits (222), runs (117) and triples (21) in 1996. **Bobby Valentine**, who wore No. 1 for the Mets from 1977-78, has also been described as scrappy, but he's been called much worse since becoming the team's manager in 1996. **Vince Coleman** (another speedy leadoff hitter) did what he could to soil the reputation of this otherwise fine group from 1991-1992.

Other One-Dogs: **Duke Carmel** (1963); **Cliff Cook** (1963); **Charlie Smith** (1964-65); **Ed Broussoud** (1966); **Jerry Buchek** (1967-68); **Kevin Collins** (1969); **Bobby Pfiel** (1969); **Lute Barnes** (1972-73); **Gene Clines** (1975); **Leo Foster** (1976); **Sergio Ferrer** (1978-79); **Chuck Carr** (1990); **Lou Thornton** (1990); **Tony Fernandez** (1993); **Kevin Baez** (1993); **Fernando Viña** (1994); and **Ricky Otero** (1994).

2

Marv Throneberry appropriately leads the rather undistinguished group of Mets to have worn No. 2. A symbol of both the futility and lovability of the 1962 Mets, "Marvelous Marv" hit .238 with 16 home runs and a league-leading 17 errors at first base for the Mets' dreadful-but-endearing first team, which finished 40-120. Throneberry retired after 14 games in 1963, but his legend lives on, thanks in part to a magnificent portrayal of himself in Lite beer commercials.



The Terrible Twos also included **Jim Fregosi** (1972-73), the disappearing All-Star we foolishly traded Nolan Ryan for; **Jose Oquendo**, a Rey Ordenez wannabe of 1983-84; and **Mackey Sasser** (1988-92), a good-hitting catcher with the unfortunate inability to return the ball to the pitcher in one try.

Also, a pack of reserve infielders including expansion draftee **Elio Chacon** (1962); **Chuck Hiller** (1966-67); **Phil Linz** (1968); **Bob Aspromonte** (1971); **Brock Pemberton** (1974-75); **Roy Staiger** (1975-77); **Phil Mankowski** (1980, 82); **Larry Bowa** (1985); **Kevin Elster** (1986); **Bill Almon** (1987); and **Doug Saunders** (1993). Also, outfielders **George Altman** (1964); **Tom Grieve** (1978); **Mike Jorgensen** (1980); **Wayne Housie** (1993); and **Damon Buford** (1995). Manager **Bobby Valentine** (1997-present) also wore No. 2, and is examined in exhaustive and side-splitting detail at [Bobby Valentine On The Web](#).



3

He wasn't known for his bat, but **Bud Harrelson** (below) used his glove to the Mets' advantage for 13 seasons, 1965-1977. A career .234 hitter, Bud flashed a great glove at

short and showed muscle when it counted, socking Pete Rose in the dusty brawl that marked the Mets surprise 3-2 victory over the favored Reds in the 1973 NLCS. Another good glove, no stick, World Champion shortstop who wore No. 3 for the Mets was **Rafael Santana** (1984-87).



Clutch-hitting outfielder **Carl Everett** (1995-97, above) provided plenty of thrills for the exciting 1997 Mets. **Tim Harkness** (1963-64) replaced Throneberry at first base in 1963 and somehow did worse (.211-10-41).

Other No. 3s: Expansion draftees **Gus Bell** (1962) and **Ed Bouchee** (1962); **Billy Cowan** (1965); future drug offender **Richie Hebner** (1979); **Mario Ramirez** (1980); future manager **Mike Cubbage** (1981); **Herm Winningham** (1984); **Junior Noboa** (1992); **Darrin Jackson** (1993); **Luis Rivera** (1994) and **Vance Wilson** (1998, 2000).

4

Daniel Joseph "Rusty" Staub (below) never allowed slow feet to get in the way of production. His first stint with the Mets (1972-1975) included a then-club-record 105 RBI on 19 home runs in 1975, though by then he'd switched to 10 (a number "retired" by Montreal for him AND Andre Dawson....go figure that one out).



He wasn't much of an outfielder any other day, but his diving catch of Brooks Robinson's liner in Game 4 of the 1969 World Series made **Ron Swoboda** (1966-70) an all-time Mets hero. "Rocky" socked 19 homers as a rookie in 1965, but never followed through on that promise. Then there was ultrahyper outfielder **Lenny Dykstra** (1985-89), who played hero in the thrilling and decisive Game 6 of the 1986 NLCS. "Nails" wore No. 4 but played like a No. 1, hitting .278 with 104 doubles and 116 stolen bases in four seasons with the Mets. Former Brooklyn hero **Duke Snider** (1963) hit 14 homers in a nostalgia tour.

Fans weren't all that excited when the Mets signed White Sox standout **Robin Ventura** to play third base in 1999, but he shut them up in a hurry. A clubhouse leader who introduced "Mojo Risin'" to the Met vocabulary, Ventura knocked in 120 runs on 32 homers and 38

doubles in '99, and ended the epic Game 5 of the '99 NLCS with the "grand single" home run. The purveyor of the Ventura website [Baseball's Forgotten Man!](#) informed me that the shot below of Nolan Ryan beating Robin's face in wasn't dignified enough for Ventura; I agreed and was happy to add the second, illustrating once again Robin's blue-collar, take-no-crap game.

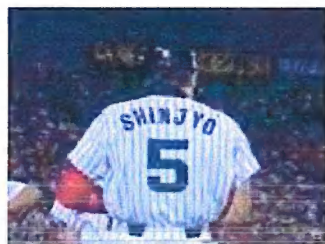


Also from the Gang of Four: Original Met **Charlie Neal** (1962-63); **Wayne Graham** (1964); Connecticut local and 70s Mets futility symbol **Bruce Boislair** (1974, 76-79); **Jose Moreno** (1980); **Bob Bailor** (1981-83); and **Lou Thornton** (1989).

5

The Mets waited 35 years to get a No. 5 as prolific as first baseman **John Olerud** (1997-1999), who shattered Cleon Jones' 19-year-old club record for batting average in 1998, hitting, as Bob Murphy would say, "Thrrr-eeeeee-fifty-four." The stoic and soft-spoken Olerud, acquired practically for free from Toronto following the 1996 season, hit 63 homers, drove in 291 runs and hit .315 during three years with the Mets. Then he left for Seattle. Easy come, easy go....

Olerud brought some much-needed credibility to No. 5, which before him, boasted few high marks beyond **Ed Charles** (1968-69) and **Steve Henderson** (1977-80) -- and even that's stretching it. Charles, a third baseman known as "The Glider," went .263-15-53 in 1968; Henderson (.297-12-65 in 99 games in 1977) did the best he could to relieve the emptiness Met fans felt from the Tom Seaver trade in which he was acquired.



Other No. 5s: No. 1 expansion draft pick **Hobie Landrith** (1962); **Joe Pignatano** (1962); **Norm Sherry** (1963); **Chris Cannizzaro** (1965); **Shaun Fitzmaurice** (1966); **Sandy Alomar Sr.** (1967); **Joe Foy** (1970); **Frank Estrada** (1971); **Jim Beauchamp** (1972-73); **Jim Gosger** (1973); **Mike Phillips** (1973-76); **Mike Howard** (1982-83); **Charlie O'Brien** (1991); **Jeff McKnight** (1992); **Jeromy Burnitz** (1993-94); **Brook Fordyce** (1995); **Chris Jones** (1995-96); and **Mark Johnson** (2000). **Davey Johnson** also wore No. 5 as the Mets' manager, 1984-1990.

Outfielder **Tyusohi "Mr. Sparkle" Shinjo** (2001) is one of the most intriguing new additions to the team in a long time. Shinjo is a fashion model and popular action figure in Japan. Details are available at this unitentionally hilarious [website](#).

6



How do you become the most-often issued uniform number in Mets history? Put a lot of short-lived crap in the uniform, of course. Six has overtaken heavy competition to become the most popular number in Mets history, issued 25 different times -- often, it seems, for no apparent reason.

The exceptions include filthy little second baseman **Wally Backman** (left, 1981-88), who scraped out a .320 batting average in the world championship year of 1986. No. 6 also belonged to another shrumpy infielder, **Al Weis** (1968-71), who managed a measly .215-2-23 in 1969 but nevertheless hit the game-tying home run in the seventh inning of the Mets' decisive Game 5 of the World Series that year.

The rest of the six-pack is virtually kicked though, as evidenced by multiple issues in 1962 (**Cliff Cook**, **Jim Marshall**, **Rick Herrscher**); 1964 (**Larry Burright**, **Bobby Klaus**); 1967 (**Bart Shirley**, **Bob W. Johnson**); 1990 (**Mike A. Marshall**, **Alex Treviño**, **Darren Reed**); 1997 (**Manny Alexander**, **Carlos Mendoza**); and 1998 (the indescribably awful **Rich Becker** and **Tony Phillips**).



Utilityman **Melvin Mora** (1999-2000) arrived late in '99 to provide a thrilling playoff rush, but faltered in an everyday shortstop role and was banished to Baltimore. **Timmoniel Perez** (2000-present) played that role in 2000's stretch drive, as his spunky game sparked victories over San Francisco and St. Louis in the playoffs. However, he'll need to follow through on that promise to make fans forget his inexcuseable baserunning loafature in the pivotal Game 1 of the World Series, which time may prove to be the biggest mistake in Met history.

Others: **Lou Klimchuck** (1966); **Greg Harts** (1973); **Rich Puig** (1974); **Mike Vail** (1976-77); **Jose Cardenal** (1979-80); **Daryl Boston** (1991-92); **Joe Orsulak** (1993-95); and **Carlos Baerga** (1995).

7



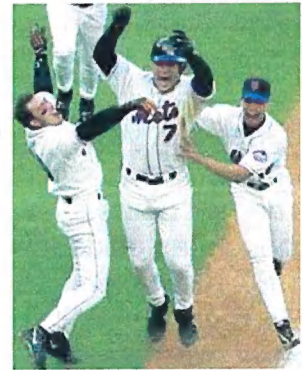
Ed Kranepool (left) played long and steady enough to have retired in



1979 holding virtually every lifetime offensive record for the Mets, and his marks for career games played (5,436), at-bats (1,853), hits (1,418) and doubles (225) still stand. Since the Bronx-born first baseman began his career in 1962, it was hard to imagine any other player wearing No. 7 for the Mets before him, but in fact there were three -- **Elio Chacon** in 1962; **Chico Fernandez** in 1963 and **Amado Samuel** in 1964 (Kranepool wore No. 21 at the time... the things you learn!)

Indelicate, perhaps, but the Mets issued No. 7 the year following Ed's retirement. Fortunately, **Hubie Brooks** did it justice. Brooks (1980-84 and 1990-92) was a terrific clutch hitter (.283-16-73 in 1984) and even proved a hefty value on the trade market, bringing back Gary Carter in a 1984 trade with Montreal. Hard to believe future MVP and world-class headache **Kevin Mitchell** (1986) was only a rookie when he played 5 positions during the year then capped the season by coolly lining a two-out single to keep the Mets' slim hopes alive in the epic World Series Game 6, scoring the tying run later that inning.

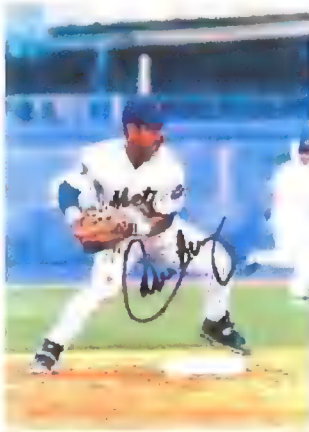
Few jobs in baseball are lonelier than Mike Piazza's understudy, but catcher **Todd Pratt** (1998-present) sure made the most of limited stage appearances. His heartstopping home run, off the edge of Steve Finley's glove in deepest center field in the 10th inning, ended the Mets' 3-games-to-1 upset of Arizona in the '99 division series and ranks among the most dramatic and unexpected thrills in team and playoff history. In late July 2001, the Mets shipped him off to a contender that could use him. **Gary Bennett** came in a return in a straight-up uni/catcher's gear swap.



Other Magnificent Sevens: **John Christensen** (1985); **Clint Hurdle** (1987); **Chuck Carr** (1990); **Daryl Boston** (1990); better-as-a-running-back **D.J. Dozier** (1992); **Jeff McKnight** (1993); the stinky **Juan Samuel** (1989); and **Charlie Greene** (1996).

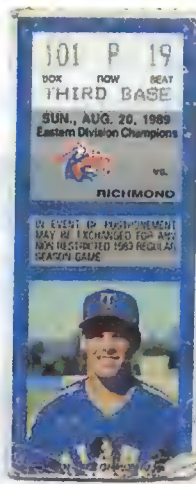


Currently awaiting an invitation to Cooperstown, Boy Scout/catcher **Gary Carter** (1985-89) was by far the best player ever to wear No. 8 for the Mets. "The Kid" was the starting All-Star catcher from 1985-88, and came through with three home runs in the 1986 World Series. Carter chose No. 8 in honor of his birthday and wedding day -- April 8. Just as likeable but not nearly as productive was **Carlos Baerga**, who accelerated his career's sad decline wearing No. 8 at Shea in 1997-98. And who can dislike Yoo-Hoo spokesmodel **Yogi Berra** (1965), who finished his career with the Mets before piloting them to the improbable 1973 National League title. Other 8s: original Met **Chris Cannizzaro** (1962-65); **Dan Norman** (1978-80); **Rick Sweet** (1982); **Ronn Reynolds** (1982-83); **John Gibbons** (1984); and **Dave Gallagher** (1992-93). In 2001, phormer Phillie **Desi Relaford** won a job as an infield backup.



9

In 1991, tough guy **Todd Hundley** switched from No. 49 to No. 9 in order to honor his father, former Mets nemesis Randy Hundley, and summarily became one of the Mets' all-time greats. A two-time All-Star, Hundley set the team standard for home runs in a season with 41 in 1996, then toughed out a painful elbow injury to lead the Mets' improbable run at the 1997 playoffs. That injury, though, essentially finished his career with the Mets, who acquired Mike Piazza during Hundley's DL sentence in 1998.



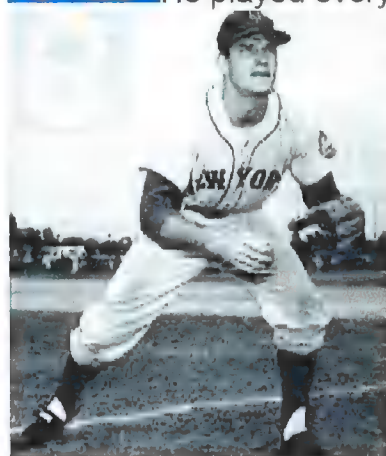
Two-time Minor League Player of the Year **Gregg Jefferies** (above on a Tides' ticket) had all the credentials when he arrived in New York in 1987, but never quite met expectations and left an unhappy casualty five years later. Original Met **Jim Hickman** (1962-66) played five relatively decent seasons in the outfield (the first four as No. 9) earning several career offensive records later broken by Ed Kranepool. The 9-Line also includes creative baserunner **J.C. Martin** (1968-69); **Bill Sudakis** (1972); free-spirited outfielder **George "The Stork" Theodore** (1973-74); one-time player-manager and future Yankee "genius" **Joe Torre** (1975-77); **Bruce Bochy** (1992); **Mark Bradley** (1983); **Jerry Martin** (1984); and **Ronn Reynolds** (1985).

How appropriate was it that the Mets 2000 season season with **Todd Zeile** on deck? Zeile (2000-present, above right) lacked the sex appeal Met fans desire in their free agents, but

despite a poor second half he turned in a solid season. He learned to play first adequately, put up decent numbers despite Ventura's struggles ahead of him (22-79-.268), spoke often of "accountability" and proved it in the big games, even in the face of terrible luck, particularly against the Yankees. He deserves a round of applause but probably won't get it.

Fun fact: Two-thirds of the Mets' Todds have worn No. 9 See pitcher Jackson Todd at 30.
Fun fact No. 2: Todd Zeile's No. 9 reflects the month and date of birthday.

10



He played every position but pitcher and catcher in 1962 -- and as things turned out, **"Hot Rod" Kanehl** (1962-64, left) would probably have done those at least as well as his teammates. A favorite of the Polo Grounds crowd, Hot Rod hit .241 in his three-season career, all with the Mets.

Today, acrobatic shortstop **Rey Ordoñez** (1998-present) earns Shea's awe with nightly ESPN fodder and a bat that Rod Kanehl wouldn't take. Still, Rey-Rey (below) is the most exciting defensive player in the history of the franchise, and his 60 RBI in '99 would give Bud Harrelson a woody. His acrobatics cost him a broken wrist and the majority of '00 season, and he returns in 2001 at square one. No player inspires more debate among Met fans and maybe that's a good thing.

Mostly in his time as a prime pinch-hitter, **Rusty Staub** (1975, 1981-85) wore 10; and **Dave Magadan** sandwiched 10 from 1989-91 between stints at 29. Both showed promise as a young Met; but today **Butch Huskey** (1993) and **David Segui** (1994) are doing it in the American League.

Also in the 10-spot: backup backstops **Greg Goossen** (1965-68) and **Duffy Dyer** (1968-74); and clock-punchers **Kevin Collins** (1965); **Kelvin Chapman** (1979); **Gary Thurman** (1997); **Kevin Morgan** (1997); and **Roberto Petagine** (1997).

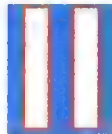


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Lenny Randle on number 11:

"I wore number 11 because #1 is for God in my life to deal with so much, and a tribute to Billy Martin, who was my Godfather in the big leagues. Guys wear different numbers for different reasons. I wore #34 as a Yankee for 34 fantastic people in my life. #21 as a Cub because of Roberto Clemente and the beautiful people I met in Puerto Rico." Lenny reports he is in New York and working on a book, "Compton to Beyond the Big Leagues." Details are available at lennyrandle.com



One of the few Mets to last well over a season at third base, Richie Cunningham lookalike **Wayne Garrett** (below, right) helped the Mets sweep the Braves in the 1969 NLCS, sparking a five-run rally in Game 1 with a double, and tying Game 3 with a home run. He lasted from '69 until 1976, when he was traded for another 11, **Pepe Mangual** (1976-77).

Eleven belonged to several short-burning Mets stars, including third baseman **Len Randle** (1977-78), who



hit .304 with 34 steals in '77, landing in the Mets' lap after punching his manager in the face in Spring Training with the Rangers; **Gene Woodling**, a relative stud for the 1962 Mets, hitting .274 in 81 games; **Ed Bouchee** (1962); infielder **Frank Taveras** (1979-81); and useful utility man **Tim Teufel** (1986-91). **Vince Coleman** (1993) embarrassed even this group. Brooklyn Dodgers standout **Duke Snider** (1963) wound down his career wearing No. 11 for the Mets.

Others: Future manager **Roy McMillan** (1964-66); **Bob Heise** (1968); **Kelvin Chapman** (1984-85); **Tom Veryzer** (1982); **Tucker Ashford** (1983); **Garry Templeton** (1991); **Dick Schofield** (1992); **Rick Parker** (1994); **Aaron Ledesma** (1995); **Tim Bogar** (1996); Mookie's nephew, **Preston Wilson** (1998); **Wayne Kirby** (1998), **Shane Halter** (1999) and leadoff hopeful **Jason Tyner** (2000). Spot-starter/long-reliever **Cory Lidle**, who wore No.

11 in 1997, is the pitcher to wear the lowest number in Mets history. Most recently, infield backup **Jorge Velandia** (2000-2001).

Mike Bishop, who was listed as 63 on the 1983 opening-day roster, actually started that season in Tidewater. A seven-year Minor League vet, Bishop was recalled on April 16, despite hitting .091 in Tidewater, when it became apparent the Mets had activated injured catcher John Stearns from the disabled list too soon and prematurely sent down third-string catcher Ronn Reynolds to make room for him.

The roster move sort of embarrassed the Mets, who had gotten off to a poor start in '83 and were counting on a return from Stearns to boost the team's and the fans' spirits. And it was that unfulfilled need for a positive PR pop, as much as anything, that made them two weeks later designate Bishop for assignment and recall one Darryl Strawberry.

Bishop, who had hit .125 with a double in 3 games with the Mets, never appeared in the Majors again. He gets all this electronic ink because he was the last player (we know of) whose uni number had not been confirmed).

12



On the bad end of trades when acquired and when dealt, second baseman **Jeff Kent** (1993-96) nevertheless had some good seasons for some bad Mets teams. He's one of seven 12s to have worn a number other than 12 for the Mets -- **Chico Fernandez** (1963), **Jesse Gonder** (1963-65); **John Stephenson** (1966); **Ron Darling** (1985-88), **John Stearns** (1977-84), and **Lee Mazzilli** (1976) were others.

Stearns makes a good case as the Mets all-time 12, with three All-Star appearances and a .264-15-73 performance in 1977 which included a then-record for stolen bases by a catcher, 25. Twelve was the best of all three numbers worn by Darling (above), who went 16-6, 2.90 in 1985 and 15-6, 2.81 in '86. **Ken Boswell** (1967-74) was a consistently mediocre second baseman who batted 1.000 in the 1973 World Series (3-for-3, all in pinch-hit duty) and clubbed home runs in two straight '69 NLCS games. **Tommy Davis** led the team in home runs (16), RBI (73) and BA (.302) in his only season with the Mets, 1967.

Other 12s: **Sammy Drake** (1962); **Joe Ginsberg** (1962); **Jack Heidemann** (1975-76); **Keith Hughes** (1990); **Willie Randolph** (1992); **Alvaro Espinosa** (1996); **Sean Gilbert** (1997-98); **Jorge Fabregas** (1998) and **Shawon Dunston**, a late-season bench-strength acquiree who made the most of a short stay in 1999.

13

On August 9, 1963, Mets pitcher **Roger Craig**, mired in an excruciating personal 18-game losing streak, switched numbers from 38 to 13 in hopes that his luck would change. Sure enough, he went nine innings in a tied 3-3 game, and was pinch hit for in the bottom of the

inning before Jim Hickman launched a game-ending grand slam. Craig (below) left the dugout to make sure everyone touched the bases.



Considered bad luck, 13 has been issued rarely -- just 10 times in team history, despite few long-time occupants. But **Edgardo Alfonzo** (1995-present) could change things. Fonzie, who wears 13 in honor of Venezuelan countryman Dave Concepcion, is doing things his idol never did for the Big Red Machine. In '99, the Fonz hit .304-27-108 and launched two of the biggest hits of the postseason -- a grand slam in the loser-goes-home playoff with the Reds and a first-inning moonshot off Randy Johnson that set the tone for a Mets' upset in the division series over Arizona. Fonz followed with another exceptional season in 2000 (.324-25-94) and should be challenging several all-time team records before long.

Neil Allen (1981-83) switched to 13 after establishing himself as an up-and-coming closer, then brought great luck on the trading block in the Keith Hernandez giveaway. But the Mets proved luck is a hideous bitch-god when they traded Mookie Wilson for Schleprock pitcher **Jeff Musselman** (1989-90). Boy did that suck.

Other 13s: **Lee Mazzilli** (1986-89); **Clint Hurdle** (1985); **Rick Cerone** (1991); **Rodney McCray** (1992, still crashing through a minor-league outfield fence on a highlight reel somewhere); **Steve Springer** (1992); and **Jonathan Hurst** (1994).

14

On April 11, 1962, former Brooklyn hero **Gil Hodges** (1962-63) hit the first home run in Mets history. He then brilliantly managed them to their first World Series title in 1969. That team won 100 games, *41 by one run!* Appropriately retired following Hodges' sudden death, there have been no 14s since Gil, but before him were **Ron Swoboda** (1965) and **Ken Boyer** (1966-67).



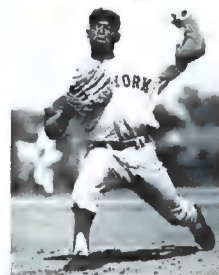


15



The first in what has become a Mets tradition of acquiring top catchers in lopsided trades was the 1964 Tom-Parsons-and-cash exchange with Houston for **Jerry Grote**. Blocking the plate and throwing out baserunners from 1966-77, the intense Grote was regarded as the league's finest defensive catcher and literally shaped the Mets' reputation of developing excellent starting pitchers (Tom Seaver even said so at his Hall of Fame induction). Pictured on the left is the only time Grote was ever caught smiling; he could justifiably carry a chip on his shoulder for never having received a Gold Glove.

He may have been criticized for failing to live up to his advance billing, but **George Foster** (1982-86, below left) provided a critical first step toward the Mets' return to respectability in the early 1980s. He knocked in 98 runs on 28 homers in 1983. **Ron Darling** (1989-91) tried 15 after 44 and 12. **Rick Aguilera** (1987-89) also tried 15 after two seasons at 38. Hard-working lefty **Al Jackson** (1962-65, below right) lost 20 games twice, but was probably the best pitcher of the infantile Mets. He continues to be a good organization guy.



Others: **Butch Benton** (1979-80); **Claudell Washington** (1980); **Brian Giles** (1981); **Mike Howard** (1981); **Rick Aguilera** (1987-88); the everpresent **Jeff McKnight** (1989); **Kevin Elster** (1992); **Jose Vizcaino** (above center, 1994-96). Lefty power threat **Matt Franco** (1996-2000), become one of the team's all-time pinch-hitting specialists, but found himself fighting for a job in 2000 and again as the 2001 season began.

16

Those who weren't Met fans in 1984 and 1985 will never have any idea how exciting baseball can be until another talent like **Dwight Gooden** comes along. Almost as

soon as he arrived in '84, there was little doubt the Mets would win a World Series again. As a teenager, he dominated the league, and his 1985 season -- 24-4, with a team-record 1.53 ERA and 8 shutouts -- remains mind-bogglingly staggeringly bewildering. Though that astounding success proved to be fleeting, and Dwight (below) all-too fragile, he still has a point objecting to his number being issued again -- four years after he left town -- to another fading phenom, **Hideo Nomo** (1998).



Sixteen also belonged to local hero **Lee Mazzilli** (1977-81), one of the most popular Mets ever and virtually the only offensive force on some dreadful-hitting teams. Beaten-up Mets fans of the late 1970s fondly recall Mazzilli's smashing performance as the Mets' lone representative in the 1979 All-Star game -- 1-for-1 with a game-winning bases-loaded walk, 2 RBI, and the cheapest home run in All-Star history. Mazzilli however seems bent on tarnishing what remains of fond Met memories. His thuggish act of treachery as a Yankee first base coach and Joe Torre lapdog sickens all but the most jaded of us. Yo, Lee: Shove it.

Derek Bell joined the Mets in 2000 in need of reclaiming previous glories, and chose to wear No. 16 as a tribute to hero (hero?) and fellow Tampa-ite Gooden. To everyone's surprise, Bell gained respect and multitudes of right-field fans with a terrific first two months before losing virtually all his skills -- and more than a few newly gained fans -- in the second half. We last saw him limping off the field in Game 1 of the Wild Card playoffs; now his gigantic pants and gigantic yacht are in Pittsburgh. Good luck to one of the weirdest players in Met history, yo.



Also: **Bobby Gene Smith** (1962); **Sammy Taylor** (1962-63); **Jesse Gonder** (1963); **Dick Smith** (1963-64); **Dan Napoleon** (1965); **Larry Miller** (1965-66); **Tom Reynolds** (1967); **Kevin Collins** (1968); **Mike Jorgensen** (1968, 70-71); **Felix Millan** (1973); **Dave Schneck** (1972-74); and **John Stearns** (1975-76).



Get ready for a rundown of one of the most-issued numbers in Mets history. In fact, 17 is one of several numbers from which you can create an entire lineup. Presenting the All-17

Mets:

SS **Mike Bordick** (2000)
 2B **Felix Millan** (1973-77)
 1B **Keith Hernandez** (1983-89)
 RF **Ellis Valentine** (1981-82)
 3B **Don Zimmer** (1962)
 CF **Rod Gaspar** (1969-70)
 LF **Jerry Morales** (1980)
 C **Choo Choo Coleman** (1962-63)
 P **David Cone** (1991-92)

Bench: **Larry Elliot** (1964); **Jimmie Schaffer** (1965); **Dick Stuart** (1966); **Don Bosch** (1967-68); **Ted Martinez** (1970-72); **Gil Flores** (1978-89); **Brian Giles** (1981); **Jeff McKnight** (1993); **Brent Mayne** (1996) and **Luis Lopez** (1997-99).

Bullpen: **Dennis Ribant** (1964); **Frank Lary** (1964-65); **Scott Holman** (1980); **Bret Saberhagen** (1994-95); and Hampton consolation prize **Kevin Appier** (2001).

MGR: **Davey Johnson**; Coaches **Bobby Valentine**, **Jeff Torborg** (5+2+10=17)

Excluding the dirty trick to include the coaching staff, that's 24 players. And **Keith Hernandez** stands above them all. The best defensive first baseman of his time (maybe all time), Hernandez was still more valuable for his leadership and post-career Seinfeld appearances -- the kinda stuff that doesn't show up in the boxscore.

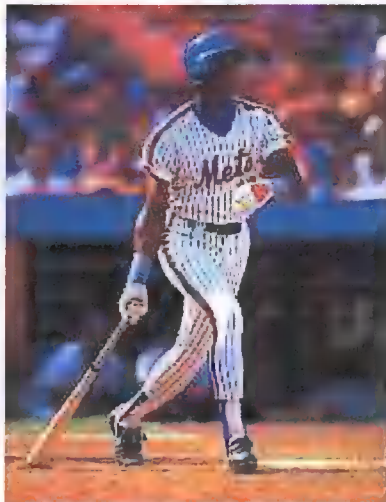


How important was Hernandez to his teammates? Well, **David Cone** (above left) switched to 17 midway through the 1991 season to pay tribute to him, and brought that number to the All-Star game in '82.

Seventeen also denoted two of the Mets most colorful players in Choo Choo Coleman and Felix Millan. Legendary for his memory of numbers -- but not names -- Coleman, a catcher, reportedly welcomed roommate Charlie Neal back after the 1962 season by saying, "I know you. You're No. 4." Choking up on the bat as if holding a dumbbell, second baseman Millan (above right) slapped (and I mean slapped) 191 hits and played all 162 games in 1975. The latter remains the Mets' all-time mark. Bordick thrilled fans by hitting a home run in his first at-bat after being acquired from Baltimore midseason to solidify the defense in Rey Ordóñez' absence. He turned out to be a disappointment overall. Good luck to Appier in 2001 -- it's not like everyone in Metland is counting on Ape to win at least 15 games or anything....

18

The New York Times article about the 18-year-old 1980 draftee out of Los Angeles breathlessly declared: "the black Ted Williams." It only began to describe what was expected of **Darryl Strawberry**, the Mets' all-time leader in home runs, broken hearts and great expectations. The lanky right fielder had some magnificent seasons (.284-39-104, 36 SB in 1987), but, like Dwight Gooden, let personal problems interfere, and suggested, when finally traded to Los Angeles in 1990, that perhaps he hadn't been giving it his all in a Mets uniform. He remains an enigma -- and to this day, when you see No. 18 in Shea Stadium, you can't help but think it could've been on a circle on the outfield wall...



The Mets issued 18 to pitcher **Bret Saberhagen** (1992-93) two years later, but we didn't get a good season out of him until he went 14-4, 2.74 in 1994 -- wearing No. 17. **Felix Mantilla** (1962) did a nice job as the Mets' first third baseman; **Pumpsie Green** (1963) was one of the many lesser-lights to follow. **Joel Youngblood** (1977-82) played some third base, second base and all three outfield positions for the Mets, managing a .275-16-60 campaign to lead the team in 1979. That's him chasing a fly above.

Baseball in Japan:

When **Takashi Kashiwada** became the first Met from Japan in 1997, he was issued number 18, which in Japan is the number usually reserved for Superstar pitchers.

According to MBTN reader and Japan baseball enthusiast Mark, pitchers in Japan tend to wear Numbers between 11 and 19.

Since Japan's Major League and lone Minor League affiliates share numbers, it's not unusual to see numbers over 50, with some bullpen catchers and other staff wearing triple digits. Coaches and managers often wear numbers in the 70s -- **Bobby Valentine** managed the Chiba Lotte Marines wearing Number 81!

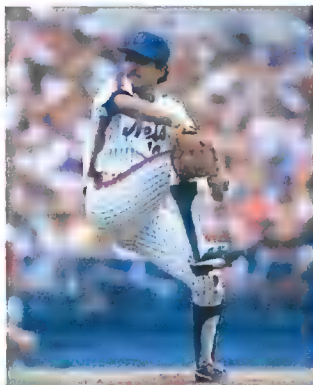


Others: **Gary Kolb** (1965); **Dennis Ribant** (1965); **Al Luplow** (1966-67); **Joe Moock** (1967); **Jim Gosger** (1969); **Dave Marshall** (1970-72); **George Theodore** (1973); **Benny Ayala** (1974-76); sporting his fifth and final number for the Mets, **Jeff**

McKnight (1994); **Jeff Barry** (1995); **Kevin Roberson** (1996); Japanese import **Takashi Kashiwada** (1997); **Craig Paquette** (1998) and **Todd Haney** (1998). Another Darryl, '99 stretch-run pickup **Darryl Hamilton** (1999-present) was quite the pleasant surprise, hitting .339 as the Mets held off the Reds for the playoffs. He lost his starting job to injuries

in 2000.

19



Lefty **Bob Ojeda** (1986-90, left) was probably the most consistent pitcher (18-5, 2.57) on the 1986 champions. Another southpaw, **Ken McKenzie** (1962-63), was the Mets only winning pitcher in '62 (5-4). On the other end of the spectrum was unfortunate right-hander **Anthony Young** (1992-93), who was 5-35 as a Met including a dismal 1-16 in 1993.

Roger Cedeno (1999) stuck around one season and set the team mark for stolen bases in a season with 66. Before and after

Cedeno, 19 belonged to **Lenny Harris** (1998, 2000-present). A jovial clubhouse cutup, Harris is approaching some all-time pinch-hitting marks in 2001.



Other 19s: **Hawk Taylor** (1964); **Tim Foli** (1970-71, 78-79); **Brian Ostrosser** (1973); **Jim Gosger** (1973-74); **Tom Hall** (1975-76); **Leo Foster** (1977); **Luis Alvarado** (1977); **Butch Benton** (1978); **Phil Mankowski** (1980); **Ron Gardenhire** (1981-85); **Jeff Gardner** (1991); **Shawn Hare** (1994); **Bill Spiers** (1995); **Jason Hardtke** (1996-97); and **Jim Tatum** (1998).

20

Many Met fans had a good chuckle when we acquired little-known third baseman **Howard Johnson** from Detroit for Walt Terrell in 1985. A few seasons later, it looked like one of the great steals in Mets history. One of the top switch-hitting power hitters ever, Johnson (below) had a frighteningly good 1991, in which he led the league and set the Mets' all-time mark in RBI (117), with 38 homers, 34 doubles, and 30 steals. He finished his Mets career in '93 ranking second all-time in home runs (192), RBI (629), stolen bases (202), doubles (214) and runs (627), and third in total bases (1,823).

(At a Spring Training game in St. Petersburg in 1992, I happened to be talking baseball to the guy sitting next to me for several innings before he revealed he was **Hojo's father**. I resisted the temptation to ask why he named his son after a roadside greasy spoon and instead snapped the below photo).



Hojo wasn't the only No. 20 to combine power and speed for the Mets. There was **Tommie Agee** (1968-72), who led the '69 Mets with 26 home runs and 76 RBI -- numbers that don't begin to describe his contributions. Agee's home run in Game 3 of the '69 World Series was all but forgotten by the time the game ended, as the centerfielder saved five runs with two amazing catches -- the first reaching to rob Elrod Hendricks with two on in the fourth, and the second a sliding catch of Paul Blair's drive to right center with the bases loaded in the seventh. He passed away suddenly in 2000.



Other 20s: **Craig Anderson** (1962-64); waning superstar **Bob Friend** (1966); the second coming of **Choo Choo Coleman** (1966); **John Sullivan** (1967); **Jerry May** (1973); **Ike Hampton** (1974); hatless pitcher **John Pacella** (1977, 79-80); **Ken Henderson** (1978); **Greg Harris** (1981); **Rick Ownbey** (1982-83); **Mike Fitzgerald** (1984); **Ryan Thompson** (1994-95); and **Roberto Petagine** (1996). Nonroster invitee **Kurt Abbott** (2000) earned a backup infield job and hit a few homers but couldn't step in for Ordonez. **Mark Johnson** became the second Johnson to wear No. 20 in 2001.

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21



Probably the first Mets' offensive player to approach superstar status, outfielder **Cleon Jones** (1965-75) retired as the Mets all-time leader in hits, home runs and RBI, and was the first Met to collect 1,000 hits. Though all those records have since been broken (many by former 21 **Ed Kranepool**), Jones' .340 average in 1969 (third in the NL that year) stood as the Met standard for 29 years.

First baseman/outfielder **David Segui** (1994-95) opened the 1994 season wearing No. 10 but switched to 21 prior to an April game against the Astros. Until the end of Spring Training, Segui's beloved No. 21 belonged to backup catcher candidate Joe Kmak, who was cut as the team broke camp. A well-traveled but nonetheless decent player most days, Segui's stint with the Mets (10-42-.241 in '94) was probably the worst of his eight Major League stops.

Kevin Elster (1987-91) spent the 1988, 1989 and 1991 seasons as the Mets' everyday shortstop, adding ten-homers-a-year power to the traditional no-hit, good-glove package. **Bill Pulsipher** (1995, 98) began his Met career promisingly as the Gen-K Lefty (5-7, 3.98 in '95), but it just got weirder from there. He'd be injured, rehabbed, drugged, traded and required often but would never win another game from the Mets.

Elliot Maddox (1978-80) was a pedestrian solution in the outfield and at third base for the Mets, but is remembered mostly for being the losing party in a lawsuit against the city claiming that a knee injury suffered in a slip in the Shea outfield nuked his career. One of the most noted Yankee-Mets, Maddox suffered the injury as a Yankee outfielder when they occupied Shea in '75.



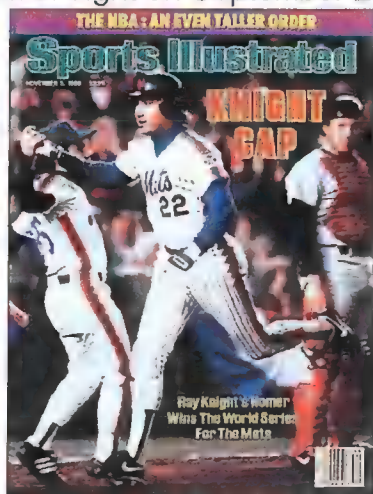
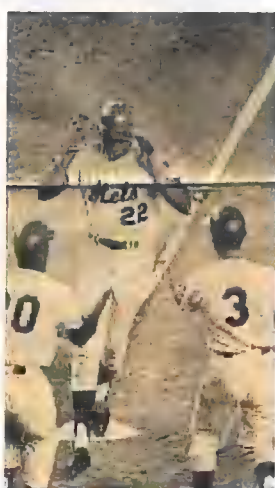
The second player -- but first success -- the Mets imported from Japan was righty **Masato Yoshii** (1998-99), who overcame first-half struggles to be a key stretch pitcher in 1999 (12-8, 4.40).



Others: **Kranepool** (1962-63); **Ron Locke** (1964); **Warren Spahn** (pitching an an empty Shea Stadium, right, 1965); **Bob Moorehead** (1965); **Billy Baldwin** (1976); **Elliot Maddox** (1978-80); **Gary Rajsich** (1982-83); **Ross Jones** (1984); **Herm Winningham** (1984); **Terry Blocker** (1985); **Kevin "Small Mouth" Bass** (1992); and **Bobby "Lefty" Jones** (2000...injured ever since).

22

Donn Clendenon "un-retired" in 1969 just in time to become of the true clutch contributors to the Mets' championship that season. That's Donn (below) being greeted at home plate after the home run that put the Eastern Division out of sight on September 24. He retired for good in 1971.



Seventeen years later, another 22, **Ray Knight** (1984-86), thundered the Mets to another World Championship. The third baseman, who singled and scored the winning run in Game 6 of the World Series, homered to put away Game 7, earning a Series MVP.

Today, it's **Al Leiter's** turn. The Jersey born lefty, one of those guys who looked like a lifelong Met the moment he put on the uni, has gone 57-37 3.32 since joining the team in 1998. He shut down Cincinnati to win the 163rd game of the season in 1999, and his performance in the final game of the 2000 World Series should be remembered as one of the most courageous in team history.

Kevin McReynolds (1987-91, 94), was a true Catch-22: Despite numbers that might indicate greatness (.288-27-99 in '88) the droll country boy lacked the charisma to become a true superstar. Workhorse **Jack Fisher** (1964-67) lost 24 games in '64 -- but was arguably the team's best pitcher in '66, limiting himself to just 14 losses. "Fat Jack" owns a bar in Easton, Pa., named after him these days.

Others: **Bob Moorehead** (1962); **Joe Hicks** (1963); **Bill Connors** (1967); **Hank Webb** (1972-73); **Jack Aker** (1974); **Bob Gallagher** (1975); **Jay Kleven** (1976); **Doc Medich** (1977); **Dale Murray** (1978-79); **Mike Jorgensen** (1981-83); **Charlie O'Brien** (1992-93); **Brett Butler** (1995); and **Alex Ochoa** (1995-97).

23



A true modern Mets mystery is figuring what got into **Bernard Gilkey** in 1996 -- or, even trickier, what got out of him in 1997 and '98. Bernard (far left) turned in one of the great all-time performances by a Met in '96 (.317-30 and team records of 117 RBI and 44 doubles) then fell flat on his face when it was apparent that only half that output probably meant playoff appearances in '97 and '98. Boo.

Original Met **Joe Christopher** (1962-65) turned in a .300-16-76 performance in 1964; **Doug Flynn** (1977-81, right) was a Gold-Glove winner at second base in 1980 but couldn't hit until he joined the softball set. The Mets were optimistic that **Brian Giles** (1982-83) would also be a Gold-Glover at second base, but a lack of a bat scorched his career as well.



Others: **Bill Murphy** (1966); **Bob Heise** (1967-68); **Leroy Stanton** (1970-71); **Teddy Martinez** (1974); **Jesus Alou** (1976); **Leon Brown** (1976); **Chris Donnels** (1991-92); **Tim Bogar** (1993-95); and **Jermaine Allensworth** (1998). Middle reliever **Pat Mahomes** (1999-2000, above) was one of those pleasant surprises every playoff team has. His 8-0 record in '99 included no small wins. Alas, he caught a bad case of Gilkey 23 Disease in 2000. **Brian Rose** was a last-minute opening day roster addition in 2001, and **Matt Lawton** (2001) took it over at the trade deadline. Waiver pick-up **McKay Christensen** joined the club early in 2002.



They say it was kind of sad to see **Willie Mays**, his best days obviously behind him, wind down his career with the 1972-73 Mets. I might not have known better back then, but my memories of the Say-Hey Kid are clearly of the dignified variety: A home run against his former team in first game with the Mets; a passionate tantrum at home plate in the '73 World Series (Harrelson was so safe). The Mets honored Willie too by not having issued his number again for 25 seasons... except for a 10-day period in 1990 when **Kelvin Torve** wore it... until 1999, when they gave it to another first-ballot Hall of Famer, **Rickey Henderson** (1999-2000). Henderson's run with the Mets ended as it always

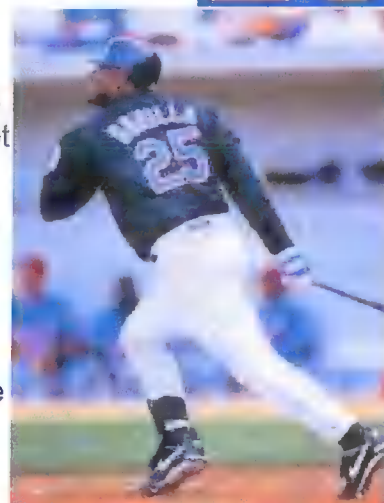
does, by falling out of favor with management. But it was fun while it lasted, and his '99 season was excellent.



Before Willie, several Mets wore 24: **Bob L. Miller** (1962); **Jerry Hinsley** (1964); **Johnny Lewis** (1965-67); **Ken Boswell** (1967); **Ed Charles** (1967); **Art Shamsky** (1968-71); and **Jim Beauchamp** (1972).

25

It will be a long time before any Met writes an odder or uglier history than **Bobby Bonilla** (1992-95, 1999). His first four years in Shea produced one good season (1993, 34-87-.265) and a lot of disappointment, and the team was clearly lucky in 1995 to unload him on a contender. Then he went and outdid even himself in 1999 by being even worse the guy he was traded for, which is astonishing considering the trade bait was Mel Freaking Rojas. Bonilla in '99 fueded with manager Bobby Valentine, sulked about playing time and complained of injuries, snipped at the press and played cards in the clubhouse all while "earning" \$5 million and producing truly ghastly stats. Boooooo.



For all the futility of the 1962 Mets, it certainly took a while for anyone to match the home run total that year of **Frank Thomas** (1962-63). His 34 home runs in '62 (to go with 91 RBI and a .266 average) withstood 13 years of challenges before Dave Kingman clubbed 36 in 1975. Flashy first baseman **Willie Montanez** (1978-79) was always fun to watch, even when the Mets weren't.

Other 25s included **Gary Kroll** (1964-65); **Bob W. Johnson** (.348 in 90 games in 1967); **Lerry Stahl** (1967-68); **Amos Otis** (1969); **Don Hahn** (1971-74); **Del Unser** (1975-76); **Jim Dwyer** (1976); **Bill Almon** (1980); **Randy Jones** (1981); **Charlie Puleo** (1981-82); **Danny Heep** (1983-86); **Al Pedrique** (1987); **Keith Miller** (1987-91); **Yorkis Perez** (1997); and **Jay Payton** (1998). Frequent Gen-K flop **Bill Pulsipher** wore 25 in 2000, then got traded away. Again. Much hyped, oft-injured outfield phenom **Alex Escobar** joined the club briefly in 2001. He now collects hype and injuries in Cleveland.

Gary Matthews Jr. escaped the Spring Training knife and made the opening day roster in 2002. He was traded after 2 games.

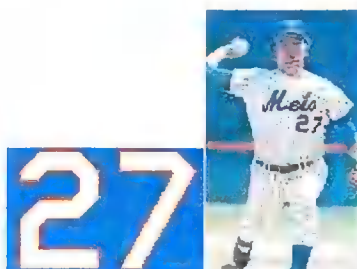
26



I vaguely remember **Dave Kingman**, as a San Francisco Giant, smash a bus window with a home run at a game at Shea in the early 1970s, and so it was with great expectations of violence to the Shea parking lot that I welcomed Kong to the Mets in 1975. For all the criticism he endured, he hit some monumental homers over the years, 154 in all; but his ineptitude in virtually every other facet of the game, including interviews with the press, sentenced him forever to an embarrassing kind of second-rate stardom. I swiped the mag cover on the left from davekingman.com, a website pushing for HOF induction for the Konger. We admire his pluck.

Lefty **Frank Viola** wore 26 upon his arrival from Minnesota in '89; **Terry Leach** (1985-89) went 11-1 after starting 10-0 in 1987. **Rico Brogna** (1994-96) had a respectable .289-22-76 campaign in 1995. **Galen Cisco** (1962-65) took a sound beating along with the rest of the early Mets' staff.

Others: **Wilmer "Vinegar Bend" Mizell** (1962); **Herb Moford** (1962); **Bob Shaw** (1966-67); **Bill Graham** (1967); **Bruce Boisclair** (1974); **Mike Bruhert** (1978); **Ray Burris** (1979-80); **Kevin Tapani** (1989); **Alejandro Pena** (1990-91); **Ced Landrum** (1993); the awful **Barry Manuel** (1997); **Ralph Milliard** (1998); **Terrence Long** (1999); regrettable stretch-run pickup **Billy Taylor** (1999); **Jon Nunnally** (2000) and **David Lamb** (2000). Catcher **Jason Phillips** took 26 in 2001.



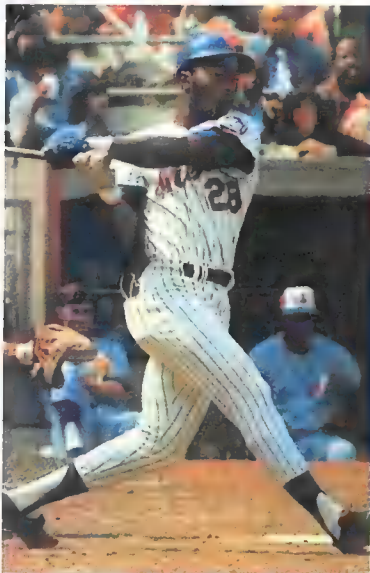
The most promising of the first wave of post-Seaver Era pitchers for the Mets was **Craig Swan** (1973-84), who won the NL ERA title in 1978 at 2.43 to go along with a so-so 9-6 record. Long Island boy **Pete Harnish** (1995-97) briefly assumed No. 1 starter duties, but he was no Tom Seaver either. Neither were erstwhile starters **Long Tom Parsons** (the 6-foot-7 pitcher who went 1-12 as a Met in 1964-65); **Don Cardwell** (1967-70); or **Bruce Berenyi** (1984).



Rather intense lefthanded relief pitcher **Dennis Cook** (1998-2001, above) just might be the best of this bunch, which also includes **Dave Hillman** (1962); **Larry Foss** (1962); future manager **Dallas Green** (1966); set-up men **Wes Gardner** (1984-85) and **Bob McClure** (1988); and **Jim Hickman** (1966); **Stan Jefferson** (1986); **Randy "Moose" Milligan** (1987); **Tom O'Malley** (1989-90); **Chuck Carr** (1991); and **Ced Landrum** (1993). Overall, a pretty weak number. **Mark Corey** took over in the waning days of 2001.

28

The young team that won the 1969 World Series was a mature one when it contended for the 1973 title, with the notable exceptions of pitcher Jon Matlack and first baseman-outfielder **John Milner**. One of the few exciting young offensive players of the early 1970s, and until Darryl Strawberry, the only farm-developed power hitter in team history, "The Hammer" (1971-77) led the Mets in home runs for three straight seasons, '72-74. Like many 1970s Mets, especially the good ones, Milner's Mets career didn't end well. He would eventually be caught up in the Pittsburgh drug trials. He passed away a few years back and it made me feel old.



You could blame **Bobby Jones** (1993-2000) for not matching the exploits of another Fresno-born righthander, but why bother when all he's really guilty of is giving his teammates a decent chance to win nearly every fifth day, however unglamourously. Jones' 74 career wins rank 8th in Mets history, and his magnificent 1-hitter to eliminate the Giants in the 2000 Wild Card series was as beautiful a swan song as could be written.

Other 28s: pitchers **Carlton Willey** (1963-65); **Bill Hepler** (1966); **Dwight Bernard** (1978-79); **Mark Bomback** (1980); **Mike Marshall** (1981); and **Scott Holman** (1982-83). Infielders **Bob Heise** (1969); and **Tommy Herr** (1990-91) also wore 28, as did utilityman **Darren Reed** (1990). **Wally Backman** made his Mets debut in 1980 wearing 28, too.

29

The Mets' last 20-game winner, lefty **Frank Viola** (1990-91, below left), was sweet music in 1990 (20-12, 2.67). Walrus-sized lefthander **Mickey Lolich** was a two-time

Baseball in Japan

About five minutes after the Mets traded Bill Pulsipher to the Brewers in 1998, **Masato Yoshii** claimed Pulsipher's Number 21 jersey. Notoriously superstitious, Yoshii made the switch for "good luck." Japanese generally associate Number 4 with bad luck, writes MBTN Japan correspondent, Mark. Four is a homonym of "shi," which means "death," and is often issued to unknowing U.S. "gaijin" playing in Japan. In case you're wondering why Japanese teams wear English-style numerals, take a look at the photo of a team from Japan touring the states in 1935. The characters confused their U.S. opponents.



20-game winner for Detroit, but a jumbo bust for the Mets in 1976 (8-13, 3.22). Other lefties who wore 29: **Willard Hunter** (1962-64); **Don Rowe** (1963); **Rob Gardner** (1965-66), who pitched the first 15 innings in a 1965 0-0 game

against Cincinnati interrupted by a curfew; **Nick Willhite** (1967); **Frank Tanana** (1993) and **Tom Gorman** (1982-85; undefeated at 6-0 in '84).

The Staub-Olerud tradition of lead-footed lefthanded hitters carried on proudly and slowly under **Dave Magadan** (below right) who wore 29 from 1986-89 and again in 1992, and hit .292 as a Met, the fourth-highest total in history among players with more than 1,000 Met at-bats.



Others: **John "Thumper" DeMerit** (1962); **Dan Frisella** (1967-69); **Bob D. Johnson** (1969); **Ken Singleton** (1970-71); **Rich Chiles** (1973); **Hank Webb** (1974); **Alex Trevino** (1978-81); **Tim Corcoran** (1986); **Jim Lindeman** (1994); **Jason Isringhausen** (1995);

Robert Person (1995-96); **Steve Bieser** (1997); **Masato Yoshii** (1998); **Octavio Dotel** (1998-99); and **Eric Cammack** (2000). Maligned former Cub and serial slow-worker **Steve Trachsel** (2001-present) joined the crew in 2001, getting off to terrible start but rebounding nicely if not a little too late.

30

Sometimes, it's best just not to think of what might have been. Like a staff of Seaver, Koosman, Matlack AND Ryan in the 1970s... or Gooden, Darling, Ojeda, Fernandez AND Ryan in the 1980s... Stop it. Let's just pretend that the 1972 trade which brought Jim Fregosi to the Mets didn't involve talented-but-erratic righthander **Nolan Ryan** (1968-71). Let's just remember that a one-time Mets pitcher named Ryan, who pitched seven innings in relief to win the decisive game of the 1969 NLCS, went on to become baseball's all-time leader in... walks.



And while we're forgetting all about young pitchers who wore No. 30 for the Mets and were traded away prematurely, let's forget all about **Mike Scott** (1979-82), who darn near eliminated the Mets from 1986 World Series contention. Bob from Arizona via Elizabeth pointed out that **Dennis Ribant** (1966) was the first Mets starter with a winning record (11-9 in '66).

The rest of the 30s are pretty forgettable themselves: **Bob L. Miller** (1973-74); **Hank Webb** (1975-76); **Jackson Todd** (1977); **Doug Linton** (1994); and **Alberto Castillo** (1995-98). Queens native **Allen Watson** took over in 1999, curiously got traded after two months for nobody, and ground his career to a halt with the Yankees. Prospect-for-life **Jorge Luis Toca** (1999-2001) has seen brief duty in 3 seasons.

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Mets 31-40

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31

This **Mike Piazza** guy is turning out to be a pretty good pickup. He's collected 137 homers and 407 RBI in the four seasons he's been here, and, most impressive, been a gentleman and hard competitor despite the a huge contract, cover-boy duties, assassination attempts by knuckleheaded Yankee thugs and constant dissing of his defensive game (some of which is justified). He probably hits the ball harder than any player the Mets have ever had. I say we keep him.



Piazza's arrival in 1998 was important enough to force a number change to the Mets' all-time No. 31, **John Franco**. The Mets all-time leader in saves and appearances, Franco (above, 1990-98) selflessly switched to 45 to make room for Mike. Another Italian-American to wear *trent-uno* for the Mets? **Jack DiLauro** in 1969.

Others: Early relief ace **Larry Bearnarth** (1963-66); **Dave Rohr** (1967-69); **Ron Herbel** (1970); **Don Rose** (1971); **Harry Parker** (1973-75); freak rookie success **Mike Vail** (1975); **Roy Lee Jackson** (1977-80); Dickie Thon drill sargeant **Mike Torrez** (1983-84); hard-throwing **Bruce Berenyi** (1985-86); **Gene Walter** (1987); and Iguana-eating pitcher **Julio Machado** (1989). Manager **George Bamberger** (1982-83) too.

32

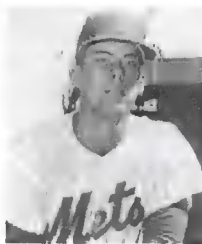
Lefthander **Jon Matlack** (1972-77) won in double-figures for his first five full seasons, picking up a Rookie of the Year award in 1972 (15-10, 2.32) and the win and MVP honors in the 1975 All-Star Game. Matlack shut out the heavily favored Reds with a nine-strikeout complete game in Game 2 of the 1973 NLCS, but despite a 2.16 ERA, lost two World Series games, including the decisive Game 7. In one of the more frightening moments in Mets history, Matlack in 1973 took a screaming line drive off his forehead and hit the earth like a rock. That's Grote and Garrett to the rescue in the photo below. How tough was Jon Matlack? He fractured his skull but came back to pitch a shutout 11 days later.



Trading for **Mike Hampton** in his walk year was a risky strategy that paid off in the predictable ways: The Mets made the World Series, and Mike Hampton (15-10, 3.14, NLCS MVP) walked. Terrificly talented guy who left his heart open to question. Coulda been an all-time Met hero but decided against it. Boooo.

More 32s: **Jack Hamilton** (1966-67); **Hal Reniff** (1967); **Chuck Estrada** (1967); **Dean Chance** (1970); **Tom Hausman** (1978-82); **Carlos Diaz** (1982-83, the main man in the Sid Fernandez trade); **Dick Tidrow** (1984); **Rick Anderson** (1986); **Tom Edens** (1987); **Mark Carreon** (1987-89); **Bill Pecota** (1992); **Pete Smith** (1994); oft-injured, would-be phenom **Paul Wilson** (1996); emergency starter, **Brent Hinchliffe** (2001); and **Bruce Chen** (2001-present), acquired from the Phillies at the deadline.

33



The first farm-raised Mets star was fiery second baseman **Ron Hunt** (1963-66), who finished second to a guy named Rose in '63 Rookie-of-the-Year voting (.272-10-42) and represented the Mets at home in the 1964 All-Star game, the only mid-summer classic ever held at Shea. He loved getting in the way of pitches and holds the Mets' all-time record in that



department, with 41, a fact opponents never forgot.

He won't be wearing a Mets cap when he gets there, but future Hall of Famer **Eddie Murray** (1992-93, right) added to his Cooperstown resume at Shea, driving in 100 runs in 1993. The rest of the 33s are back-up catchers **Clint Hurdle** (1983); **Barry Lyons** (1986-90); **Charlie O'Brien** (1990); **Kelly Stinnett** (1994-95) and **Tim Spehr** (1998); lunchbucket pitchers **Bob Hendley** (1967); **Bill Connors** (1968); **Dave Rohr** (1969); **Ray Sadecki** (1970-74, 77), **Mac Scarce** (1975); **Ken Sanders** (1975); **Pete Falcone** (1979-82); **Bill Latham** (1985) and **Anthony Young** (1991); and bench players **Dan Norman** (1977); **Andy Tomberlin** (1996-97); **Mike Kincade** (1998-2000) and **Bubba Trammell** (2000). Bubba was traded to San Diego following the 2000 season for injured/ineffective reliever **Donne Wall** (2001) in a straight-up uni swap the Mets would like to have back.



34

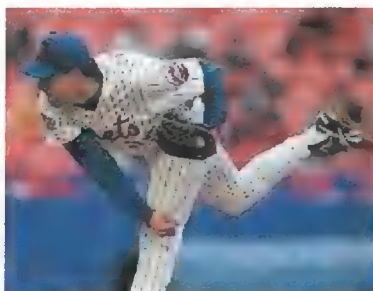
Had he played in today's era, **Bob Apodaca** would probably have been revered as a God, been given an important-sounding title like Set-Up Man, or perhaps become the best closer in Seattle Mariners history. But in the 1970s, he was simply a relief pitcher who got people out. **Dack** (1973-77) collected 16 wins, 26 saves and a 2.86 ERA as a Met. He returned in 1997 to coach Mets pitchers and lasted until June 6, 1999.

Mental illness sufferer **Jimmy Piersall** ran the bases backward after cracking his 100th career home run with the 1963 Mets and was summarily traded to California; **Cal Koonce** (1967-70) won six games in relief, and saved seven, for the '69 Mets. Thirty-four was also the first number for **Cleon Jones** (1963).

Other 34s: **Dave Hillman** (1962); **Dennis Musgraves** (1965); **Jerry Arrigo** (1966); **Nolan Ryan** (1966); **Jack Lamabe** (1967); the late **Dan Frisella** (21 saves in 1971-72); **Phil Hennigan** (1973); **Rusty Tillman** (1982); lovable backup catcher **Junior Ortiz** (1983-84); **Mario Diaz** (1990); **Julio Valera** (1990-91); **Chico Walker** (1992-93); **Kenny Greer** (1993); **Frank Seminara** (1994); **Blas Minor** (1995-96); **Rick Trliceck** (1996); **Chuck McElroy** (1999); knuckleballer **Dennis Springer** (2000); **Jerrold Riggan** (2000) and **Tom Martin** (2001). In 2002, **Pedro Astacio** gets a starting job. If his arm stays attached, a nice deal.

35

Former scab **Rick Reed** (1997-2001, below) had few supporters and little chance, but damned if he didn't earn his way into the hearts of the Mets and their fans with excellent seasons in 1997 (13-9, 2.89) and '98 (16-11, 3.48). **Dock Ellis** once pitched a no-hitter on acid, but it was the Mets that needed painkillers when he threw in 1979 (3-7, 6.04). Ellis was a Yankee before a Met, and the same poison probably affected the ineffective **Lee Guetterman** in 1992.



Others: **Ray Daviault** (1962); **Larry Miller** (1965); **Billy Wynne** (1967); **Don Shaw** (1967-68); the man traded for Willie Mays, **Charlie Williams** (1971); **Joe Nolan** (1972); **Randy Sterling** (1974); **Luis Rosado** (1977); **Ed Lynch** (1980-81); **Randy Jones** (1982); **John Christensen** (1984); **Billy Beane** (1984-85); **Joe Sambito** (1985); **John Gibbons** (1986-87); **Craig Shipley** (1989); **Orlando Mercado** (1990); **Pat Tabler** (1990); **Kenny Greer** (1993); and **Doug Henry** (1995).

The Mets presented Mark Guthrie with 35 at his Meet-the-media press conference, but **David Weathers** will wear the digits in 2002.

36



Soft-spoken Minnesotan **Jerry Koosman** (1967-78) was in many ways a second banana to Tom Seaver, but my Mom always liked him better. Koos was the team's all-time top lefty starter, ranking behind Tom Terrific in all-time starts (346), games (376), complete games (108), innings pitched (2,545) and shutouts (26), and outshined everybody in the post-season, with a 4-0 record, including the complete-game win in the fifth and final game of the 1969 World Series. He's also the Mets all-time losingest pitcher, but that's only because we never made Mel Rojas a starter. Koosman easily cruises the class of 36. **Bob**

They're Back!

Former 36 **Greg McMichael**, who was traded to, and reacquired from, the Dodgers in 1998, is one of 25 once-and-again Mets. **Clint Hurdle** ('83, '85, '87) and **Mike Jorgensen** ('68, '71-'73, '81-'83) are the only three-time Mets

in team history.



Others: **Bill Almon**, **Bobby Bonilla**, **Hubie Brooks**, **Jeromy Burnitz**, **Roger Ceden**, **Tim Foli**, **Jim Gosger**,

G. Miller was the worse of the two Bob Millers of 1962; and **Tracy Stallard** lost 27 games over 1963-64. **Ed Lynch** (1982-86) was a likable guy who turned in a decent 1985 season, then went and became the Cubs' GM.



Lenny Harris, Al Jackson, Dave Kingman, Josias Manzanillo, Lee Mazzilli, Jeff McKnight, Kevin McReynolds, Bob L. Miller, Ray Sadecki, Rusty Staub, Jeff Tam, Alex Trevino, Pete Walker, and, of course, Tom Seaver. (Thanks to MBTN reader Mike).

Others: **Sherman "Roadblock" Jones** (1962); **Dennis Musgraves** (1965); **Wayne Twitchell**

(1979); **Dan Boitano** (1981); **Manny Hernandez** (1989); **Dave Lidell** (1990); **Kevin Baez** (1990, 1992); **Tony Castillo** (1991); **Tito Navarro** (1993); **Mike Birkbeck** (1995); **Don Florence** (1995); **Greg McMichael** (1997-98, 98-99); **Jeff Tam** (who wore 36 during McMichael's brief exile in Los Angeles in 1998); and **Grant Roberts** (2000-present). This just in: **Roger Craig** wore 36 for one game in 1963.

37

Amazin', amazin', amazin'. The only number between 1-50 in Mets history to be issued once and only once, 37 belonged to the Mets first manager, **Casey Stengel**. The Old Perfesser presided over the worst team in history (you could look it up), but there couldn't have been a more appropriate man to usher National League baseball back to New York. Stengel, a Brooklyn Dodgers star outfielder in the teens and 1920s, said it all when he called his team, and by extension their fans, the Amazin' Mets. "They carry wonderful placards...the placards are terrific!"



38

Roger Craig (1962-63) started the first Mets game ever, and was rewarded for his pioneering efforts by leading the league in losses for both his years with the Mets (24 and 22). He set a losing precedent for 38s that lasted through **Ed Bauta** (1963), **Willard Hunter** (1964) **Dave Eilers** (1965-66), **Ralph Terry** (1966-67); **Dennis Bennett** (1967); **Bill Connors** (1967); **Al Jackson** (1968-69); **Jesse Hudson** (1969) and **Rich Folkers** (1970); before **Buzz Capra** (1971-73) finally managed a winning mark in 1972 (3-2).

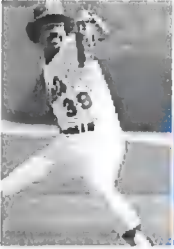


Often the odd man out of the Mets' brilliant starters of the 1980s, **Rick Aguilera** (1985-86, 89) went on to become one of the American League's perennial save leaders. Geeky-looking fireman **Skip Lockwood** (1975-79) rung up double-figure saves for three straight seasons. A Paul Wilson prequel, **Tim Leary** made his debut in 1981 as perhaps the most highly touted young pitcher since Seaver, but hurt himself after three innings and didn't return again until damaged goods '83 and '84. **Dave Mlicki** (1995-98, left) was one of those workaday starters that marked the mid-90s Mets. Props to Mlicki for



beating the Yankees in the first-ever Subway Series game.

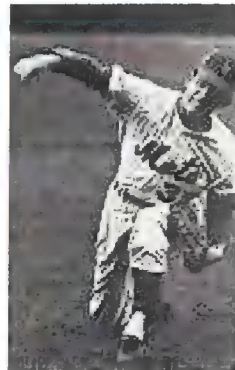
Other 38s: **Jerry Cram** (1974-75); **Bob Gibson** (1987); **Blaine Beatty** (1989-91); **Pat Howell** (1992); **Dave Telgheder** (1993-95); **Jeff Tam** (1998); and **Jerrodd Riggan** (2001).



39

From 1982-87, tuning in a Mets game and seeing 39 on the mound usually meant the Mets were in trouble or soon to be there -- **Doug Sisk** was pitching. A hard-throwing sinkerballer, Sisk (known Doug "Risk" in his day) routinely created chaos of order. His numbers weren't bad (33 saves, 3.10 career ERA), but rarely was there a dull moment achieving them.

As a rookie in 1969, **Gary Gentry** (1969-72, below right) won 13 games and Game 3 of the World Series, and later brought back George Stone in a 1972 trade. **Jeff Kent** (below left) briefly wore 39 after coming to the Mets in a trade with Toronto in 1992. Also making his Mets debut in 39 was **Hubie Brooks** in 1980. Others: **Steve Dillon** (1963-64); **Dick Selma** (1966-68); **Tommy Moore** (1972-73); **John Strohmayr** (1973-74); Afro-ed reliever **Nino Espinosa** (above, 1975-78); **Phil Lombardi** (1989); **Kelvin Torve** (1990-91); **Rich Saveur** (1991); **Josias Manzanillo** (1993-95, 99); **Juan Acevedo** (1997); **Benny Agbayani** (1998); **Rick Wilkins** (1998) and **Jim Mann** (2000). Deliciously-named young starter **Dicky Gonzalez** took 39 in 2001.



40

One of the better little trades in Mets history was the 1972 offseason swap with Atlanta that brought Felix Millan and spare-part righthander **George Stone** to Flushing. Stone (1973-75) helped the Mets win the NL pennant by going 12-3, 2.80 in '73, though his career rapidly tanked afterward. Similarly in 1998, former Brave **Armando Reynoso** seemingly came out of nowhere to lead a post-season drive, but petered out one game too early. His loss against Atlanta on the final game of the season cost the Mets a tie for the Wild Card and did little to redeem a strong 7-3 record. Revenge, a quarter-century later?



One of the five we received for Tom Seaver in 1977, giraffish righthander **Pat Zachry** (1977-82) put in six honest years but never tempted anyone to forgive M. Donald Grant. Those who complain about Rey Ordonez' weakness at the plate ought to take a gander at the stats of slick-fielding 1963 shortstop **Al Moran** (1962-63), who managed a sickly .193 batting average (and 27 errors!) in 119 games. Sidearmner **Jeff Innis** (left, 1987-93) was a

beguiler in the Mets' bullpen and good clubhouse interview.

Other 40s: **Kevin Collins** (1967); **Bill Short** (1968); **Brent Strom** (1972); **Calvin Schiraldi** (1984-85); **Randy Niemann** (1986); **Eric Gunderson** (1995); **Dave Telgheder** (1995); and **Mike Fyhrie** (1996)., **Ryan McGuire** (2000); and **C.J. Nitkowski** (2001).

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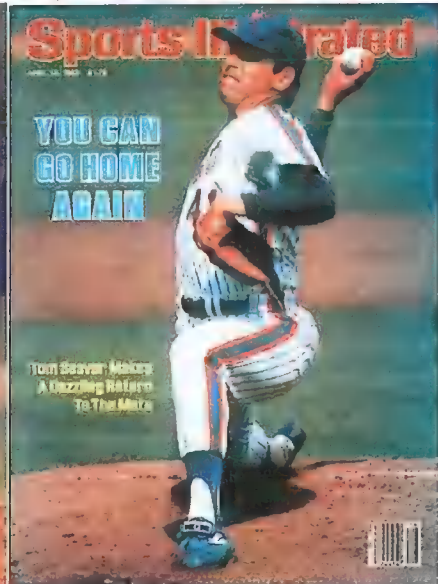


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41

The Mets, and perhaps all of baseball, will never have another like **Tom Seaver**. Simply rattling off his Mets stats doesn't properly do justice, but here goes: 198-124, 2.57, 3,045 IP, 401 games, 395 starts, 171 complete games, 44 shutouts, 2,541 strikeouts. All lead the Mets all-time lists, and probably won't ever be seriously challenged. More importantly, Seaver (1967-77, 83) brought the Mets credibility, which as history has proven, isn't easy to come by in Flushing. There's a lot more on Tom Seaver at the (new) [Tom Seaver Musuem](#).



They hardly deserve mention, but pitchers **Clem Labine** (1962); **Grover Powell** (1963); **Jim Bethke** (1965) and **Gordon Richardson** (1965-66) warmed up 41 for Tom. They combined for a 5-5 lifetime record.



42

Major League Baseball in 1997 officially retired 42 from every team in honor of groundbreaking Brooklyn Hall of Famer Jackie Robinson. While no 42s in Mets history approached that category, clownish righthander **Roger McDowell** (above, 1985-89) will be remembered by Mets fans for his contributions, including 12 wins in relief in 1986. With a 9-4, 2.74 out-of-the-bullpen performance in 1969, **Ron Taylor** (1967-71) played a role similar to McDowell's for the 1969 World Champions.



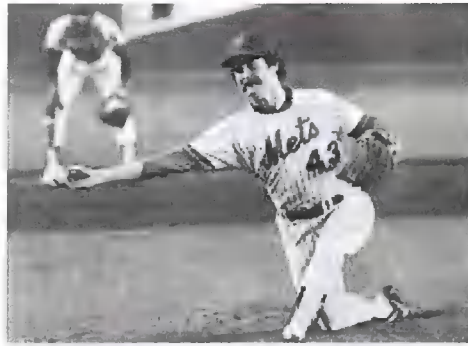
Grandfathered into the 42 clause was big **Butch Huskey** (above, 1995-98), who hinted at greatness in '97 but didn't quite get there. Described by Bob Murphy as a "country gentleman" 8,000 times in his career, rocksteady catcher **Ron Hodges** (1973-84) made a career as an understudy to Grote, Stearns and Trevino. Also: **Jim Bethke** (1965), **Larry Elliott** (1965-66) and **Chuck Taylor** (1972).

And just when you thought you'd seen the last of the 42s, here comes **Mo Vaughn** in 2002.

43

Appropriately, Lost Nation, Iowa-born starter-reliever **Jim McAndrew** (1968-73) leads the where-are-they-now collection of Mets' No. 43s. While McAndrew pitched some excellent ball for the early 70s Mets (11-8, 2.80 in 1972), others came and went quickly, not necessarily leaving beautiful corpses.

The Lost Nation: **Ted Schreiber** (1963); **Bill Wakefield** (1964); **Darrell Sutherland** (1964-66); **Joe Grzenda** (1967); Midnight Massacre acquiree **Paul Siebert** (1977-78); **Juan Berenguer** (1978-80); **John Mitchell** (1986-89); **Kevin Brown** (1990); **Dan Schatzeder** (1990); **Doug Simons** (1991); **Mark Dewey** (1992); **Mickey Weston** (1993); **Mike Remlinger** (1994-95); **Paul Byrd** (1995-96); the horrendous **Toby Borland** (1997); **Todd Pratt** (1997); **John Hudek** (1998) and **Rigo Beltran** (1998-99).



An exception: sidearmer **Terry Leach** (above, 1981-82), who threw one of the best games in Mets history, a 10-inning 1-hitter over Philly in 1982.

44

Henry Aaron popularized 44 as a number reserved for sluggers, and for five games in May of 1991, that's what **Howard Johnson** tried to snap out of a slump (he switched back to 20 after admitting he felt "uncomfortable" and that his wife disapproved). But on the whole, Mets' 44s have not struck fear in the hearts of their opponents, at least not as longball threats.



David Cone (1987-91) was, however, a power pitcher; and the best of a group of arms that also included **Al Schmelz** (1967); **Bill Denehy** (1967); **Bob Rauch** (1972); **Bob Myrick** (1976-78); **Andy Hassler** (1979); **Ray Searage** (1981); **Ron Darling** (1983-84); **Bill Latham** (1985); **Tim Burke** (1991-92); **Tom Filer** (1992); **Kevin Lomon** (1995); **Jason Isringhausen** (1995-97, 1999); and a guy we probably shouldn't have traded, **Jeff Reardon** (1981).

Met fans waited a long time for **Jay Payton** (1999-present) to finally show up; injury-free at last, he won the starting center field job in 2000 and made a case for Rookie of the Year. His career stalled amid still more injuries in 2001.

Human power failures **Harry Chiti** (1962); **Tom Paciorek** (1985); **Ryan Thompson** (1992-
<http://www.akula.com/~pax/mets/41-50.htm>

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93) and **John Cangelosi** (1994) also wore 44.

45



One of the true characters (and very best relief pitchers) in the history of the Mets was lefty **Tug McGraw**, who coined the term "Ya Gotta Believe!" in 1973 then went out and made believers of the Mets and their fans. The Mets' first true stopper, Tug (1965-67, 69-74) collected 85 saves with the Mets and was 11-4, 1.70 in relief in 1971.

The appearance of a 45 in a Mets game has often meant there was a close game to be won: **Jeff Reardon** (1979-80) was a budding closer and **John Franco** (1998-present) a legendary if waning one.

Others: **Ron Locke** (1964); **Dick Selma** (1965); **Bill Connors** (1968); **Rick Baldwin** (1975-77); **Butch Metzger** (1978); **Brent Gaff** (1982-84); **Randy Neimann** (1985); **John Candelaria** (1987); **Edwin Nunez** (1988); **Mark Carreon** (1990-91); **Paul Gibson** (1992-93); **Mauro Gozzo** (1993-94); and **Jerry DiPoto** (1995-96).

46

Whatever you do, don't wear this number.

Reliever **Neil Allen** (1979-80) switched to the unpopular 13, possibly to get away from a group that included highly touted trade bait **David West** (1988-89); 8th string catcher **Chris Jelic** (1990); towering bust **Terry Bross** (1991); washed-up fireman **Barry Jones** (1992); lefty spot-starter **Brian Bohanon** (1997-98), brief visitor **Willie Blair** (1998); Norfolk Shuttler **Jermaine Allensworth** (1999); and most recently, **Rich Rodriguez** (2000) who in addition to being the least heralded free agent signee in team history was probably also its worst. Manager **Dallas Green** too. Yuck.

47

While righty starter **Jay Hook** (1962-64) was credited with the Mets' first-ever win, it was lefthanded reliever **Jesse Orosco** (1979, 81-87) who will be remembered as the Mets' all-time 47. Orosco, who was acquired for Jerry Koosman in what became a trade of the pitcher on the mound for the final out of both the Mets' World Series clinchers, saved 107 games as a Met, second only to John Franco, and had a career ERA of 2.74, second

only to Tom Seaver. He was reacquired in the '99 off-season, only to be traded again before the season began. Don't think he's coming back...



Other 47s: **Tom Sturdivant** (1964); **Dick Rusteck** (1966); **Mardie Cornejo** (1978); **Wally Whitehurst** (1989-92); **Mike Draper** (1993); **Jason Jacome** (1994-95); **Reid Cornelius** (1995); **Derek Wallace** (1996) and super sub **Joe McEwing** (2000-present).

48

Randy Myers (1985-89) saved 56 games as a Met before being traded in the straight-up blockbuster with Cincinnati for John Franco. **Danny Napoleon** (1966) was one of the 100-plus third basemen for the Mets, and his 1965 output (.144, 0, 7 in 68 games) shows why. Other 48s included Flushing-born former Shea vendor **Ed Glynn** (1979-80), who went from serving hot dogs in the Shea stands to cutting the mustard in the bullpen (seven saves in 1980).



Others: **Nino Espinosa** (1974); **Randy Tate** (1975); **Juan Berenguer** (1978); **Julio "Iguana-Man" Machado** (1990); **Pete Schourek** (1991-93); **Roger Mason** (1994); **Pedro A. Martinez** (1996); **Ricardo Jordan** (1997). In 1999, brief visitor **Dan Murray** was traded straight-up for **Glendon Rusch** (2000-2001) in a uni switch. Rusch (above) proudly wore 48 into a starting job in 2000 and turned out to be one of biggest surprises in baseball. That season, at least. Hard-throwing reliever **Kane Davis** makes the squad in 2002.

49

For want of a true star at 49, we at least have a few trivial pursuits. Q: Who made the last out when the Mets were victimized by Jim Bunning's 1964 perfect game? A: **John Stephenson** (1964-65). Q: Who is listed first, alphabetically, on the all-time Mets roster? A: **Don Aase** (1989). Q: Whom we did screw over Detroit with in the Howard Johnson trade? A: **Walt Terrell** (1982-84). Q: What 1986 Met went on to author an inspirational/self-help book? A: **Ed Hearn** (1986). Q: Hey, Ed Hearn! Why's you wear No.

49? "It was the number issued to me in my rookie season during spring training. After 8 1/2 years toiling in the minor leagues, I would have worn a fraction on my back if it meant getting to the show!" (Ed is more than happy to answer your questions at Edhearn.com. Wish him luck in his ongoing health battles).

Q: Can you name the other 49s in Mets history? A: **Kevin Kobel** (1978-80); **Dyar Miller**

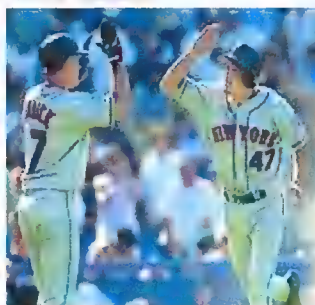
Chain, Chain, Chain...

Former 49 Ed Hearnis more than a 1986 Mets hero: He's the grandfather of the oldest active "trade chain" involving the Mets.



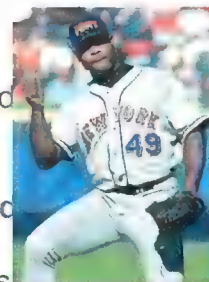
Signed as a Minor League free agent prior to the 1986 season, Hearn was traded after the 1986 season for David Cone. Cone was later traded for Ryan Thompson and Jeff Kent. Thompson went to Cleveland for Mark Clark, who went to the Cubs in the six-player deal that brought the Mets Brian

McRae and Turk Wendell. From there, the chain splits, with Wendell going to Philadelphia in '01 in exchange for Bruce Chen (who went early in 2002 for Scott Strickland) and McRae to Colorado in '99 for Chuck McElroy and Darryl Hamilton; McElroy went to the Orioles for Jesse Orosco, who was flipped to St. Louis for **Joe McEwing**. Super Joe, along with Strickland, continue the trade chain today!



(1980-81); **Don Schulze** (1987); **Todd Hundley** (1990-91); **Joe Vitko** (1992); **Mike Birkbeck** (1992); **Pete Walker** (1995); **Bob MacDonald** (1996); **Joe Crawford** (1997); and **Brad Clontz** (1998).

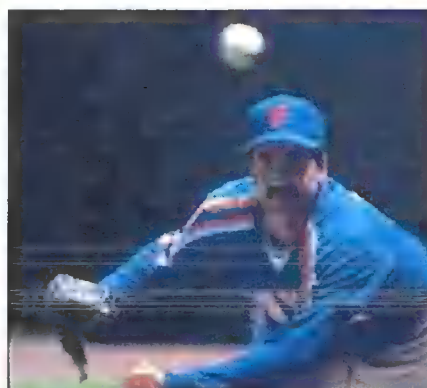
In 1999, hothead relief pitcher **Armando**



Benitez emerged as a frightening late-inning force. He's had his moments but is the kind of dominating relief ace (106 saves in three seasons) the Mets have needed for a long time. Struggles come with the territory, and those near the end of 2001's aborted comeback ran Benitez the risk of getting a, um, "reputation." That's nonsense of course, but try convincing a Met fan of anything.

50

Hefty lefty **Sid Fernandez** (1984-93) donned No. 50 to pay tribute to his home state of Hawaii, and Don Ho would have been proud. Lazily throwing a curveball that no one seemed able to hit, El Sid compiled a 98-78 record as a Met, with a 3.14 ERA and 1,449 strikeouts -- good enough for fourth on the all-time Mets' list. His best season was perhaps 1989, when he went 14-5, 2.83. His .198 lifetime batting average was the highest ever among Mets pitchers.



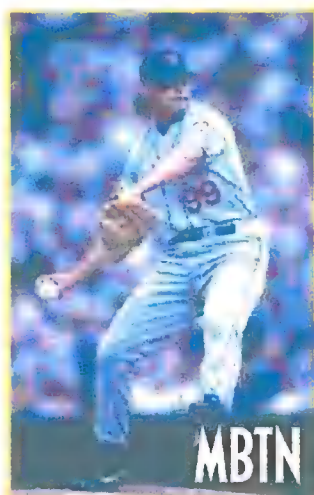


All through the 1999 off-season, my lasting memory of the final Met game of the year wasn't Ball Four from Kenny Rogers, or even Piazza's jack off Smoltz. It was of chunky **Benny Agbayani** (1999-2001) sliding home safely with what was, oh-so-briefly, the go-ahead run in Game 6 of the NLCS. In many ways, Agbayani (another Hawaiian Five-oh) symbolized how special that '99 team was. Called up from Norfolk in May to patch an ailing outfield, he collected 10 home runs in a month, helping the team stay afloat when it might have otherwise collapsed. Though Agbayani didn't stay so hot, the spirit he brought to the team when things looked bad appeared to revisit his

teammates several times again before it was all over. In 2000 he faced a potential demotion to Norfolk, but won a job with a dramatic pinch-grand slam in Japan, and kept on hitting. His 13th-inning, game-winning HR in the NLCS cemented his place among all-time Met heroes.

Either of these guys crushes the competition for 50 whether they sit on them or not: **Juan Castillo** (1994); and **Rick Trilicek** (1997).

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Things get pretty sketchy from here on out. I'll be jumping around often.

51

"Ineffective" is simply too nice a word to describe wide-awake nightmare **Mel Rojas** (1997-98), who reminded some of the Bernard Gilkey syndrome, only without the good year leading up to the collapse. Once upon a time, Mel really was a top-rate closer for Montreal. **Mike Maddux** (1993-94), meanwhile, will never be mistaken for his brother Greg. **Lance Johnson** wore 51 in 1996, before moving to the sleeker No. 1. **Rick White** arrived at the trade deadline in 2000 and provided some quality relief innings down the stretch.

53

There's room for improvement here from **Eric Hillman** (1992-94) and his 2-9, 3.97 performance in 1993. Perhaps veteran lefty **Mark Guthrie** (2002) could provide it.

54

The only 54 I've found so far was **Mark Clark** (1996-97) who surprised everyone with an excellent 1996 season.





55

Odd-looking former Met nemesis **Orel Hershiser** (1999) showed Shea fans, at long last, why his teammates had called him "Bulldog" throughout his career. With nearly nothing left in the tank, Orel worked awful hard to win a miraculous 13 games for the Mets in '99 and his value as a teammate and teacher resulted in rumors he may be back to coach or manage here someday. No self-respecting Met fan alive would even have considered this idea before 99. New from the West Coast in 2002 is ex-Giant starter **Shawn Estes**.

56

Brian McRae (1997-1999) morphed from organization whipping-boy to productive center fielder and back again over his three years with the Mets. His number 56, by the way, is a tribute to his dad and former Kansas City manager, Hal McRae. (Five plus six equals dad's 11). **Tug McGraw** also wore 56 in his first appearance with the Mets, in 1965. **Jeff Kaiser** (1993) also wore 56. Or so I'm told. **Darren Bragg** (2001) takes the digits this year.



58

My

tribute to **Luis Rosado** is cheapened some by a recent discovery: He was 58 only in 1980, and not in 1977, when he wore No. 35. Still, "Rosie" compiled a .179 lifetime batting

average as a Met, with 1 double, 1 hit-by-pitch, and 3 RBI. And despite no hits in four at-bats wearing 58, he remains the greatest 58 in Mets history. Bravo, Luis Rosado!

What Happened in 1980?

The Mets have rarely in their history issued to players numbers above 50. But that philosophy seemed to change somewhat in 1980, when five players were issued lofty digits: **Dyar Miller** (56), **Ed Lynch** (59), **Hubie Brooks** (62), **Jose Rosado** (58) and **Mario Ramirez** (61).

Though we at MBTN don't know why this happened, we suspect a simple freak of equipment supply-and-demand is the most likely explanation: Four of those players were September call-ups, and three of them (Ramirez, Brooks and Miller) wore other numbers that season. A partial explanation might be that coach **Doc Edwards** (32) and manager **Joe Torre** (9) were occupying at least a few of the traditional "player" numbers that year.

And perhaps, on their way to a 95-loss season, the Mets wanted to give us something else to remember it by. What we do know is that never before 1980, or since, has the team issued so many high numbers.

59

Ed Lynch made his major league debut in this number in 1980.

61

Back when he was messy fiasco, **Jesse Orosco** (1979). And infielder **Mario Ramirez** a year later.

62

This number, said to be the highest in Mets history till Turk Wendell hopped over the chalk (note the Bishop suspicions below) was worn by **Hubie Brooks** for a few short games in 1980.

73

Clearly, **Kenny Rogers** (1999) did not possess the quirkiness to have commanded this obscene number upon his arrival from Oakland in July of 1999. Now, throughout history, Rogers will look doubly ridiculous walking in the series-ending run in the 1999 NLCS.



In fairness to The Gambler, he was a 37 in previous stops with Oakland and Texas (but not in the Bronx, where 37 is also retired in honor of **Casey**



Stengel).

Another view: Alert reader **Kenny** wrote to point out that 73 "is not all that preposterous or obscene" pointing out that **Tony Phillips** wore #73 for Anaheim in 1997 and **Ricardo Rincon** wore it in Cleveland. And that all Rogers has done is switch digits a la **Carlton Fisk** (27-72) most famously with the Red and White Sox.

Well, OK then. Let's look for a moment at similar quandries, and their solutions, in Mets history:

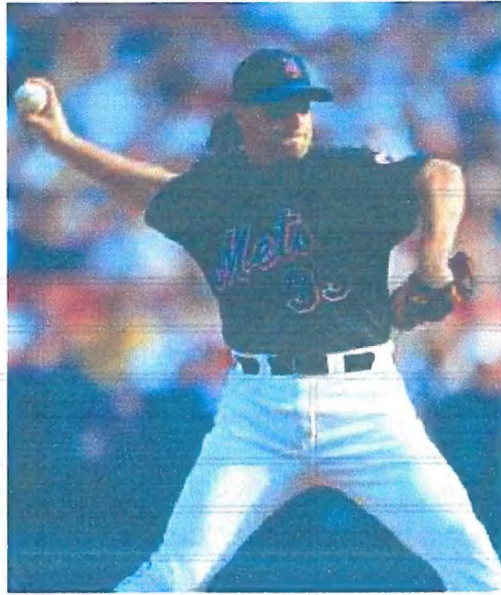
Name	Year	Number requested	But it was taken by	So instead he settled for
John Valentin	2002	13	Edgardo Alfonzo	4
Jeff D'Amico	2002	13	Edgardo Alfonzo	18
Roger Cedeno	2002	19	Lenny Harris	19; Harris was traded a week later
Jeromy Burnitz	2002	20	Mark Johnson	20; Johnson switched to 5
Mike Hampton	2000	10	Rey Ordonez	32
Todd Zeile	2000	27	Dennis Cook	9
Kenny Rogers	1999	37	Casey Stengel	73
Mike Piazza	1998	31	John Franco	31; Franco switched, to 45
Jeff Torborg (mgr.)	1992	10	Dave Magadan	10; Magadan switched, to 29
Frank Viola	1989	16	Dwight Gooden	26
Lee Mazzilli	1986	16	Dwight Gooden	13
Keith Hernandez	1983	37	Casey Stengel	17
Willie Mays	1972	24	Jim Bechaump	24; Bechaump switched to 5.
Gil Hodges (mgr.)	1968	14	Ron Swoboda	14; Swoboda switched, to 4.
Yogi Berra	1965	8	Chris Cannizzaro	8; Cannizzaro switched, to 5

There are others, I am certain (including the near-riotous **Rickey Henderson-Willie Mays** No. 24 fiasco of 1999). If you have an opinion on this raging controversy, please [write in and share](#).



Turk Wendell chose 99, he says, only because 13 was already gone. He pumps his fist, slams the rosin bag, leaps over baselines and brushes teeth between innings. He gets lost hunting mountain lions and wears a necklace of turkey teeth that one day might sever his jugular. But fans really love Turk Wendell because behind all that

flakiness, he's a hard worker who'll do anything to win, just as it was desire and not sideshows that marked the careers of Tug McGraw and Roger McDowell, the Met relievers Wendell so vividly brings to mind. Wendell (1997-2001) set a Mets record by appearing in 80 games in 1999. His career ERA as a Met is a terrific 3.34 over an astonishing 285 games in 4+ seasons.



0

I was just going to sneak this number in with **Rey Ordonez** (1996-97) in the 10's until it was pointed out to me that **Terry McDaniel** wore No. 0 in 1991. Rey-Rey says he switched to 10 from 0 because, "I want to be more than nothing." Oh, he's that. And more.

